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SUBJECT: SUNNI AND SHIA POLITICIANS EXPRESS OPPOSING VIEWS
ON SUPPORT FOR REFUGEES AND GOI MOTIVATIONS; EXPECT LIMITED

REFUGEE RETURNS OVER NEXT YEAR

REF: BAGHDAD 2960

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Patricia Butenis
for Reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The Secretary's Senior Coordinator for Iraqi Refugee Issues, Ambassador James Foley, visited Baghdad October 22-27 to review Iraqi refugee admissions and special immigrant visa (SIV) programs and to assess the role the U.S. can play in facilitating refugee and IDP returns. Deputy Prime Minister Rafi Al-Essawi and Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari told Foley in separate meetings that the GOI was not effectively encouraging refugee returns and neither expected significant returns during the current uncertain political environment. They expected that many refugees would hold off returning while they assessed a range of factors over the coming year, such as provincial elections, SOFA implementation, security and jobs. They were both open to USG suggestions and pressure on the GOI to increase assistance to refugees and IDPs, but they were pessimistic about positive GOI actions in the upcoming months. Ministry Displacement and Migration (MODM) Minister Abdul Samed Rahmad Sultan told Ambassador Foley he and his ministry are focused on promoting IDP and refugee returns and criticized UNHCR assistance programs in Jordan and Syria as impeding the return process. Sadiq al-Rikabi, the General Director of External Relations in the Prime Minister's Office, repeated the MODM message that conditions had improved and it was safe for IDPs and refugees to return home. He expressed the view that in a year there would be new jobs created from Iraq's reconstruction programs that would attract back the refugees. Mahmud Al-Mashhadani, speaker of the Council of Representatives, told Foley that the government's efforts were under-funded and that it should contribute more to support refugees in neighboring countries. End Summary.

2. (SBU) The Secretary's Senior Coordinator for Iraqi Refugee Issues, Ambassador James Foley, visited Baghdad October 22-27 to review Iraqi refugee admissions and special immigrant visa (SIV) programs and to assess the role the U.S. can play in facilitating refugee and IDP returns. Ambassador Foley was accompanied by Department of Homeland Security Associate Director for Refugee, Asylum and International Operations Lori Scialabba. Ambassador Foley and Ms. Scialabba met with a range of senior embassy officials and U.S. military officers, Minister of Migration and Displacement Abdul Samed Rahman Sultan, Minister of Foreign Affairs Hoshyar Zebari, Deputy Prime Minister Rafi Al-Essawi, Council of Representative Speaker Mahmud Al-Mashhandani, the Baghdad Security Plan Spokesman Tahseen Shaikly, and others. Foley and Scialabba also met with UN Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) Staffan de Mistura, with UNHCR's country team, with IOM officials, and ICRC's head of delegation for Iraq. Ambassador Foley saw returnee assistance efforts first-hand and met with recent returnees to Hurriya during visits in north western Baghdad to the

ISF-run Karkh Assistance Center, to the Al-Faruk Mosque in Hurriya, and to the Al-Cherkuk IDP squatter camp.

U.S. MESSAGE ON REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT, REFUGEE AND IDP ASSISTANCE, AND FACILITATING RETURNS

13. (SBU) In several meetings with GOI interlocutors, Ambassador Foley explained that as the Secretary's coordinator for Iraqi refugee issues he has three responsibilities: 1) to resettle to the U.S. the most vulnerable refugees, 2) to advocate in Washington and with European and Arab countries on behalf of life-saving assistance efforts for Iraqi refugees in the region, and 3) to support a credible and effective returns process for Iraqi refugees and internally displaced persons. Foley told interlocutors that the U.S. is primarily concerned with the plight of the refugees who fled Iraq in 2006 and 2007 as a result of the sectarian violence and who are in precarious economic circumstances in the region. Foley said that his efforts to garner contributions from European and Arab countries for refugee assistance programs had failed to yield much support; however, the U.S. had largely made up the shortfall in FY 2008. Foley said that the U.S. would continue programs to resettle the most vulnerable refugees and continue to fund international organizations and NGOs to assist to refugees in neighboring countries as long as the needs persisted, GOI opposition notwithstanding. He urged the GOI to contribute to the needs of its citizens in the region and to address the underlying causes of displacement, rather than simply exhort the refugees to return home, as the GOI currently is doing through its high-profile publicity campaign.

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SUNNI DPM, SPEAKER AND FM CRITICIZE INADEQUATE AND BIASED GOI APPROACH

14. (C) Meeting Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) Rafi Al-Essawi, a Sunni, on October 26 at his residence, Ambassador Foley discussed increased USG support for Iraqi refugees and asked for more GOI financial help to Iraqi refugees abroad. Foley stressed that Iraqi refugees felt abandoned by their government and stressed that a significant GOI effort to assist them would not only address their physical needs, it would signal that the GOI wanted them back and this would have an enormous psychological impact. DPM Essawi questioned whether the GOI was really serious about addressing displacement. He said GOI needed to do more, contrasting the \$25 million in GOI support on Iraqi refugees as embarrassing compared to the amount of USG support.

15. (C) Although refugee return was crucial, Essawi expected that returns would remain a trickle until after the elections and this current period of political uncertainty. He said some parties were satisfied with the minimal returns of refugees and IDPs as it perpetuated Shia political dominance in Baghdad. He cited the example of Hurriya, which used to have a population that was 70 percent Sunni and now has a local council that is 100 percent Shia. Upcoming local elections in early 2009 would give the Shia parties another 4 years of dominance in Baghdad. Although the GOI may publicly be saying the right things, Essawi dismissed the recent GOI organized flights from Cairo, Amman and Damascus as media events. He maintained that there was no real planning and money to encourage refugees and IDPs to return.

16. (C) Essawi said the GOI underestimated the necessity of helping return the refugees, many of whom are Sunnis and professionals who were badly needed in the GOI and Iraqi businesses. He stated there was sectarian bias in GOI return efforts, with most support going to Shi'a IDPs. Essawi was "pessimistic" about improving GOI support, saying that while he saw this as a humanitarian issue, the GOI viewed it ideologically.

17. (C) Essawi had no suggestion on how to pressure the GOI into action, but suggested that the Ambassador or the Commanding General may be able to "shame them into doing something" if they raised the difference in U.S. versus GOI funding for refugees during a GOI NSC meeting. Essawi agreed with Ambassador Foley that one possible approach could be for the GOI to support health and education needs of refugees abroad by funding insurance companies and private schools, saying this would lower the risks of corruption. He urged the USG to judge the GOI on what it did, not on what it said with regard to returns. He commented that the majority of the refugees remain unswayed by the offer of free flights. They were waiting and watching to see what happened on the ground.

18. (C) Council of Representatives (CoR) Speaker Mahmud Al-Mashhadani, joined by Abdul Khaliq Zangana, CoR member and chairman of the CoR's Displacement Committee, told Foley that he and the Displacement Committee had been actively engaged on refugee and IDP issues. He said the issue was for him an emotional one -- "...most of the displaced are my family, my people....my six sisters are refugees.....my house was taken during the sectarian wars."

19. (C) Mashhadani expressed appreciation for the support the U.S. provided to Iraqi refugees and was sharply critical of GOI performance. He said that the Displacement Committee had visited IDPs in Iraq and refugees in neighboring countries and had offered good solutions, but the GOI had not followed up. Saying that the government had abandoned the refugees in Syria and Jordan, Mashhadani called it shameful that Iraq, an oil producing country, did not support Iraq's refugees while other countries did. He regretted that the CoR had not succeeded in moving the GOI to change its policy. Mashhadani said that MODM did not receive enough support from the GOI and threatened that if the budget for IDPs and refugees was not substantially increased in 2009 he would consider blocking some GOI initiatives as leverage. Mashhadani characterized MODM Minister Sultan as weak and his ministry as ineffectual. He commented that the GOI had empowered neither the MODM nor the Ministry of Human Rights to carry out their mandates. Mashhadani said there was a simple reason why the government does not want to help the refugees and that is because the majority are Sunni and the GOI views them all as Baathists. He worried that if more were not done to support refugees in Syria, the youth would become a fertile recruiting ground for Syrian intelligence, AQI, and Baathists. He expressed concern that it would be easy for

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the refugees to conclude that democracy had brought them nothing and encourage them to support a new dictatorship. Saying that it would cost the GOI relatively little to support and regain allegiance of the refugees, Mashhadani asked rhetorically why the GOI should give Syria such a cheap asset with which it would manipulate Iraq's internal affairs.

10. (C) Mashhadani indicated that if the GOI could demonstrate success on IDP returns this would go a long way toward showing refugees abroad that conditions were favorable for them to return too. However, Mashhadani drew attention to the situation in Hurriya, from which he himself had fled. There had been some returns, but most IDPs from Hurriya remained unable to go back because of militia influence. Although Coalition Forces and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) had walled off Hurriya and ISF controlled entry and exit points, Mashhadani said this had not choked militia influence. He proposed that the ISF needed to establish checkpoints within Hurriya and conduct operations to rid the area of militia elements deep inside the district. On the way out from the discussion Zangana, expressed the same view and recounted how he had personally told his old friend PM Maliki (whom he had known for years in exile) that Maliki's attitude towards the refugees differed little from Saddam's treatment of the exiles.

¶11. (C) In an informal evening meeting with Tahseen Shaikly, spokesman for the Baghdad Security Plan (BSP), COR member and Iraqi National Dialogue Front leader Saleh Al-Muttlaq and COR member Mustafa Mohammed Amen Al-Heati poured scorn on the GOI refugee return effort as insincere and sectarian-based. Al-Muttlaq and Al-Heati claimed that there was no real GOI determination to bring back Sunni refugees. Al-Muttlaq described GOI treatment of the refugees as motivated by hatred, isolation and revenge.⁸ Shaikly said that the refugees were asking themselves whether they could live in Iraq as first class citizens. The others responded that for most, the answer remained negative. The BSP spokesman confided to a Baghdad PRT participant afterwards that he largely agreed with what the two critics had said. .

¶12. (C) Ambassador Foley emphasized to Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari at a meeting on October 26 at the MFA that the GOI needed to support refugees and IDPs and provide the necessary conditions to encourage return: housing, employment, and security. Zebari characterized the results thus far of the GOI's campaign to bring back refugees as disappointing⁸. He expected that until the issues of elections, a security agreement between Iraq and the U.S., and regional uncertainties were solved, refugees would remain outside of Iraq. Echoing DPM Essawi, Zebari added that these issues were affecting GOI policies on returns because many in the GOI did not want returns to impact the political balance.

¶13. (C) Zebari offered that the best way for the GOI to demonstrate commitment to national reconciliation would be to support the returns effectively and support the refugees until they could return. He said for now, the refugees did not believe that the GOI was going to enable them to get their homes and jobs back. Zebari said that the GOI needed to provide more than money to encourage refugees; it needed to provide programs to support returnees and to send officials to meet with refugees in Jordan and Syria. He stressed that Iraq needs the talents of the refugee, adding that it would take years to replace the education and training that had gone into these people. He was unsure of how to pressure the GOI into action, but welcomed any USG advice. He added that he would continue working to bring "our people" back to Iraq.

SHIA OFFICIALS CLAIM SUCCESS ON RETURNS; OPPOSE ASSISTANCE AND RESETTLEMENT FOR REFUGEES

¶14. (C) Minister of Displacement and Migration (MODM) Abdul Samed Rahman Sultan seized on Foley's third responsibility, supporting returns, as the one the GOI was most focused on. Sultan said he had traveled to Jordan and Syria to advance GOI efforts to encourage refugees to return, and mentioned the repatriation flights the GOI had organized to return some Iraqi refugees from Egypt, Jordan and Syria. Sultan alleged that most of the refugees were Ba'athists and that Syrian and Iraqi Ba'athists and the media were conspiring to convince the refugees to not return to Iraq. Despite this, he claimed his government was serious about bringing refugees home and suggested the U.S. and GOI should work together on a strategy to return refugees to Iraq. Sultan said the return effort should be speeded up, in part

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to save refugee women, who were particularly vulnerable. Sultan expressed concern that if women were deviated⁸ (into prostitution) they would never be accepted back by their families and communities. Sultan expected that even with a strong effort to bring Iraqi refugees home, 20 to 30 percent would never return to Iraq.

¶15. (C) Criticizing UNHCR assistance programs in hosting countries, Sultan said the UN must change its strategy to focus on returns. Sultan complained that UNHCR did not have accurate figures on the number of refugees, particularly in

Syria. He claimed the Syrian government was hampering GOI efforts to bring home Iraqi refugees. He criticized both Jordan and Syria for taking Iraq's money but not providing services to Iraqi refugees. He asked Foley to help him bring Iraqis back to Iraq. Sultan claimed that in his opinion conditions were right for most refugees to return. He said the government was taking steps to attract refugees and suggested that the U.S. put most of its resources allocated to Iraqi refugee assistance into programs that would advance returns. On resettlement of refugees to the U.S., Sultan flatly disagreed with the program, which he said encouraged Iraqis not to return and contributed to the brain drain. However, Sultan advocated establishment of programs to take refugees to the U.S. for higher education and training they could bring back to Iraq. Sultan expected that the return process would take 18 months to complete. However, he observed that security was the fundamental factor determining return and it fell outside his ministry's purview. Sultan hoped that the U.S. and Iraqi messages on returns could be the same and stated that security had sufficiently improved to permit returns. However, he conceded that a large scale and hasty repatriation could create instability. Foley noted clear disagreement with the GOI on resettlement and assistance for refugees. On returns, he stated U.S. agreement with the GOI's goal but not with the GOI's methodology or precipitate timetable. He suggested the GOI change its focus from a publicity campaign to improving security and other conditions such that refugees could be persuaded eventually to return home.

¶16. (C) Sultan complimented IOM and International Medical Corps, which provide technical assistance to his Ministry. Foley noted USAID/OFDA plan to expand IMC's contract to provide MODM with additional staff to speed up payment of grants and stipend to returnees and evicted IDPs.

¶17. (C) Sadiq al-Rikabi, General Director of External Relations in the Prime Minister's Office and close personal adviser to Prime Minister Maliki, asserted that Jordan, Syria and international organizations had exaggerated for political and economic reasons the numbers of refugees, but acknowledged that whatever the number it was significant. He said that technical issues associated with the refugee problem (e.g., property restitution, jobs, services, etc.) should be addressed separately from what he characterized as political issues (e.g., engaging with the opposition on returns). Rikabi mentioned that the GOI was planning to hold a conference with members of the opposition on the return of former regime elements.

¶18. (C) Rikabi said that Prime Minister Maliki wanted to encourage refugees to come back to Iraq and said he would tell the prime minister about Ambassador Foley's suggestion that reaching out to the refugees and assisting them in the countries of asylum would be an effective way to demonstrate GOI concern for their welfare and desire to have them come home. Rikabi replied that Prime Minister Maliki had visited Amman and spoken frankly to professionals about the need to return to help rebuild their country. Rikabi voiced the PM's view that assistance for refugees was not a solution) rather it would perpetuate their exile. He urged the U.S. to make clear to the refugees that international assistance would not be open-ended. Rikabi criticized the U.S. refugee resettlement program, saying that many refugees would not come home if they perceive an opportunity to emigrate to the U.S. The Prime Minister, he said, was focused on assisting Iraqis to return. Rikabi welcomed Foley's statement that return was the only durable solution for most refugees, but said that the U.S. and Iraq needed to coordinate on the steps to make that happen. Foley defended U.S. support for Iraqi refugees and again suggested the GOI undertake systematic outreach to the refugees in order to develop a credible strategy tailored to fulfill the requirements for their eventual return.

¶19. (C) Foley told Rikabi the MODM was moving in the right direction on returnee assistance but that it lacked capacity -- a problem the U.S. planned to assist the ministry with

through a grant to IMC to help the ministry stand up more returnee assistance centers in Baghdad. Rikabi said that the GOI was looking at MODM,s proposed budget for 2009 and evaluating the success of its current efforts.

¶20. (C) Rikabi said he had recently met with a Sunni support committee in the Ahadamiya area of Baghdad and pressed home the message that conditions had improved and it was safe to return home. With regard to the wholesale displacement of Sunnis from the Hurriya neighborhood, he commented that many of the displaced had moved into much larger houses of Shia displaced from Ameriya and that they were in no rush to go home. Nevertheless, Rikabi conceded that people (IDPs and refugees) were so traumatized by the sectarian violence in 2006-2007 that it would take time to regain their confidence.

¶21. (C) Rikabi expected that it would take a year to create the conditions inside Iraq that would lead to resolution of the displacement crisis. He anticipated that by then new construction, jobs, services, and some international schools would attract refugees to return. He noted that in the past, the GOI had been accused of sectarian behavior. He said that the Prime Minister,s Basra campaign had changed this dynamic. He boasted that after MNF-I had estimated it would take 9 months to clean out Basra, the PM had done it in three weeks. Likewise, the US had planned for a 6 month Sadr City campaign. Baghdad Operations Commander General Abud had planned for 3 months and the Prime Minister had ordered it done in a week. Commenting acerbically that the U.S. military can put everything on a power point, Rikabi stiffened and said our plan is not your plan. He said that if the GOI had followed cautious and careful U.S. planning, the situation in Iraq would be very complicated. Iraq needed to take risks to solve its problems. He expected to see positive changes in a year. But Rikabi cautioned coldly that Iraq will not be Switzerland.

¶22. (C) On the recent displacement of Christians from Mosul, Rikabi commented that the suffering of the minorities cannot be separated from the suffering of all Iraqis. He recounted that when Sunni extremists took control of Baghdad,s Doura neighborhood, they gave Christians the option to convert to Islam, while they summarily murdered the Shia. He stressed that the Prime Minister wanted to avoid steps that would cause the Christians to leave. Rikabi noted that the Christians had always been an easy target for terrorists. He then asked rhetorically, why they had not been forced out of Mosul last year, when the terrorists were in control. He implied that their displacement from Mosul was part of a Kurdish political agenda.

ISF SUPPORT FOR RETURNS

¶23. (C) With support of the 2nd brigade of the 101st Airborne (2/101), Ambassador Foley visited the Karkh Assistance center (KAC) at Muthana Air Field in Baghdad and toured several other locations in Hurriya for a first-hand look at IDP returns.

¶24. (C) Following the Prime Minister's decree on property restitution, the ISF stood up the KAC in September, when it became clear that the MODM had failed to open an assistance center for west Baghdad. MODM did, however, open a center in east Baghdad. The KAC processes property restitution and evictions of squatters and appeared to run efficiently. 6th Iraq Army Commander, Brigadier General Jasim said that the center had processed 853 property restitution cases since opening, at a rate of 10-12 per day since September 1, 2008.

(Note: This number is not comprehensive. Local ISF units are enforcing property restitution and eviction independently of the KAC). There were approximately 25 families being served while we were there. A civilian official from the government's real property/deeds office was processing property restitution requests and verifying ownership

documents and ISF officials set up property inspections and, when needed, initiated procedures to evict squatters. They also document rental agreements for owners who opt to rent out their properties rather than return. Regrettably, a MODM official was not present to register returnees and assist with application for the one million Dinar returnee grant. BG Jasim complained that when an MODM official did show up, he only recorded statistical information to document returns and did not actually assist clients; and indeed on Saturdays, when the center was busiest, MODM officials did not come to the KAC at all. Jasim said he needed MODM as a partner in this process and that MODM needed to have two officials at the center daily if it wanted to be serious. Jasim estimated that 90 percent of the returnees had received no assistance from MODM and that most people simply gave up

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on the bureaucratic and slow process. He knew of only one family which had received compensation for damages, and stated that generally getting benefits required personal connections. Jasim added that the GOI assistance alone was not enough to change the security situation. He said that people needed jobs to induce them to stop the criminal and gang behavior.

125. (C) From the KAC at Muthana Foley moved to Hurriya and the Sunni Al-Faruk Mosque, which the ISF had commandeered to use as an administrative office and returnee assistance satellite center. ISF Major Hussein, in charge of the center, briefed on operations to facilitate property restitution and evict squatters. He said that 700 homes had been returned to owners in Hurriya and 485 families had returned to live in their homes. Of the remaining 300, approximately half were empty, awaiting return and owners had rented out the other half, opting not to return to the area. He noted that quite a few families had been displaced to Hurriya from Abu Ghraib, and do not yet feel it is safe to return home. The ISF was actively seeking out individuals associated with violence in Hurriya, and the major showed a list of 59 people for whom he had arrest warrants. He said that the Hurriya community was gaining trust in the ISF and beginning to provide it with information on the targets. Foley went into the main hall of the mosque and met with a group of recent returnees, mainly women. In one touching conversation with refcood, a middle-aged woman related how she didn't have the heart to send away the family who had been squatting in her house and instead allowed them to stay with her family until they could find another place to go. A Sunni IDP woman explained that she did not feel safe in Hurriya, and wanted to sell her house there so she could move, but alleged that GOI will not allow sales. Another woman had not heard about the MODM payments available to evicted squatters until her friend was asked if she had received them. The mosque is where Shaykh Mahmoud Ali Al Falahi, Vice Chair of the Sunni Endowment, had been the long time Imam until he was displaced in 2006. Mahmoud has been critical of the GOI for not taking sufficient steps to facilitate return of Sunnis from Hurriya and the slow pace of the ISF in taking control of Hurriya from Shia militias (REFTEL). Mahmoud has been back to visit the mosque, however, and noted that the ISF had treated it with respect.

126. (C) The final visit was to an IDP camp called Cherkuk compound. According to the Iraqi Government, the estimated 700 Shia families living here were renting out their homes elsewhere, while squatting on the public land for free. The site visit did not corroborate this belief, as the standard of living was very low, latrines flowed out to open sewer pits, fresh water was spotty, and only some of the residents managed to steal electricity from the nearby neighborhood. Most of the residents claimed to have been displaced from Haswa, Abu Ghraib, and Sabi' al-Boor. Many residents left their homes due to high rents and unemployment. Most families lacked stable income. Residents expressed concern about periodic eviction threats from the government, but so far a protest by these residents has delayed action.

Children reported not being allowed to go to school- apparently because the GOI did not want to encourage the families to stay in the settlement. Local NGOs were active in the area.

¶27. (C) At a round table discussion with members of the Baghdad PRT and ePRT's from northern, eastern and western Baghdad and officers from the Second BCT of 2/101 Airborne in northwest Baghdad, all agreed that returns of refugees and IDPs needed to be voluntary. Appearing to force displaced Iraqis to return too hastily would be seen as authoritarian and could increase support for insurgent groups. Refugees in neighboring countries would observe the process with IDPs and would likely return gradually. The ePRT team leader covering Abu Gharaib described how the local ISF commander, a Sunni related by marriage to PM Maliki, exercised singularly unhelpful pro-Shia leanings by evicting large numbers of Sunni squatters, while employing heavy-handed tactics to discourage Sunni IDPs from returning. In the ePRT's analysis, his goal was to serve Shia interests in the coming elections and to block Sunni freedom of movement into Baghdad. His actions had reinforced a belief by many Sunnis in West Baghdad that the government would not treat them equitably. Another participant suggested that Sunni refugees may wait until after the November/December 2009 national elections to return, and questioned whether property restitution systems would still be in place at that time. Baghdad PRT's Rule of Law Advisor noted that civil courts were generally resolving property disputes within a year. Another participant stated that the GOI would need to look at

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how the returns system, which was designed around IDPs, may need to be adjusted for refugee returns- for example, unlike IDPs, refugees may not have a place to stay while paperwork is sorted out for them to move back into their homes.

COMMENT

¶28. (C) Iraq's Sunni and Shia leaders displayed sharply differing views about GOI performance and intentions with regard to refugee and IDP returns. The PM and his allies show no sign of budging from their refusal to support refugees in neighboring countries. While nearly 200,000 IDPs have returned to their neighborhoods over the past year, mainly from other areas of Baghdad, refugees represent less than 15 percent of the total and are returning, according to UNHCR, at the rate of 2000 per month. However, both UNHCR and media report that Iraqi professionals continue to exit the country. While interlocutors differed in their expectations of when refugees would start moving back, there was consensus that their decisions would depend on the experience of IDPs and developments in Iraq over the next year. DPM Essawi underscored the difficulty of this process inasmuch as serious IDP and refugee returns could challenge the redrawn map of Baghdad that has enshrined Shia dominance. Voter registration for the early 2009 provincial elections closed on August 28. The registration rate among IDPs was a dismal 2.6 percent. With no provision for absentee voting for refugees and only minimal refugee returns, it is likely that those Baghdad neighborhoods from which large numbers of Sunnis were displaced will remain firmly under the control of Shia parties for the next four years.

¶29. (C) There is an obvious contradiction between the negative depiction of refugees by GOI officials as Baathist enemies and the ongoing GOI publicity campaign, which purportedly aims to bring them all home. Clearly this campaign is widely viewed through a sectarian perspective by supporters and critics alike. However, as Ambassador Foley was able to observe, there are credible efforts underway on the ground to return IDPs to their homes in Baghdad. These efforts need to be better supported by international organizations and by the GOI itself; their success or failure could help determine whether large numbers of refugees can be persuaded to return in the future.

130. (U) Ambassador Foley cleared on this message.
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